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Sierra Leone: Implications of Instability

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An Intelligence Assessment

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ALA 83-10030
March 1983

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Sierra Leone: Implications of Instability

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An Intelligence Assessment

This paper was prepared by [redacted]
Office of African and Latin American Analysis, with
a contribution from [redacted] of the same
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may be addressed to the Chief, West-East Africa
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This paper has been coordinated with the
Directorate of Operations and the National
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**Sierra Leone:
Implications of Instability**

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Key Judgments

*Information available
as of 18 February 1983
was used in this report.*

US Embassy reporting over the past year indicates that the pro-Western government of President Siaka Stevens continues on its path to financial collapse and political instability. The Embassy points out that Stevens has survived since 1968 only through bailouts by Western creditors, adroit political maneuvering, and heavyhanded repression. Stevens—who is about 84 but shows no sign of stepping aside and has made few preparations for orderly succession—is gambling that these timeworn tactics will continue to work. We and the US Embassy believe that Stevens's death or another serious bout of unrest inspired by the economic situation could trigger an upheaval potentially detrimental to the regional interests of the United States and the West African states friendly to Washington.

Years of economic decline have generated growing resentment of the regime's corruption and mismanagement, according to the US Embassy, as the suffering of disadvantaged groups intensifies. Embassy observers note that commodities are in short supply and wages are low, prices and unemployment are up, and small-scale strikes and riots brought about by economic problems are on the increase. We believe these conditions could trigger a regime-threatening explosion more severe than the labor violence in 1981 and student rampages in 1977.

The Army has seized power three times since independence in 1961, and new rumblings in the military have been reported by US officials. Embassy sources indicate that the government's weak economic performance and corruption among senior officers is alienating some middle-grade and junior officers. At the same time, the Embassy has received reports that the officers and enlisted men are unhappy because they are cut off from the opportunities for graft and other privileges enjoyed by senior officers. We believe there is a strong possibility that the military will seize power if economically inspired disorders overwhelm Stevens or if his passing leads to a prolonged succession struggle among contenders in the country's single party.

If Stevens is overthrown or dies in office, we and the US Embassy believe that he would be succeeded initially by a moderate government of civilians or senior military officers who would recognize Sierra Leone's traditional dependence on Western financial aid and US food assistance. Embassy reporting indicates, however, that Stevens's most likely constitutional and

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senior military successors are handicapped by poor health, lack of broad-based tribal support, or identification with the corrupt old guard. In our view, these factors will make it difficult for a successor regime, whether led by civilians or senior military officers, to convince the public that it intends to alleviate corruption and economic hardship.

The paucity of obvious civilian and senior military successors with the requisite talent and integrity, coupled with bread-and-butter grievances among the lower ranks, suggests that we can eventually expect a takeover from this latter quarter. Events in Liberia and Ghana demonstrate that a government led by young, ill-educated, and populist-oriented military personnel bent on reform will prove difficult for the West to deal with and will offer unforeseen opportunities for the Libyans and Soviets. The US Embassy believes that the precarious economic and security situation likely to follow a coup from the lower ranks could impel the new and insecure leadership to seek Libyan help if Western aid were not at least sustained. Should a government emerge in Freetown more ideologically compatible with Soviet interests, we believe Moscow might over time prove interested in gaining military access to Freetown's air and port facilities to help monitor mid-Atlantic sea lanes.

In our judgment, a protracted period of instability in Sierra Leone—especially if it propelled the military's lower ranks to power and opened opportunities for Tripoli and Moscow—would further agitate moderate states in West Africa already concerned about Ghana's radical drift. We believe neighboring Liberia—where the US Embassy reports economic deterioration could thwart plans for civilian rule by 1985—would press for even more US assistance. In our view, Guinea, which according to the US Embassy fears a spillover of instability and has meddled in Sierra Leone before, might even intervene militarily—with no guarantee of success—to shore up Stevens or an acceptable successor.

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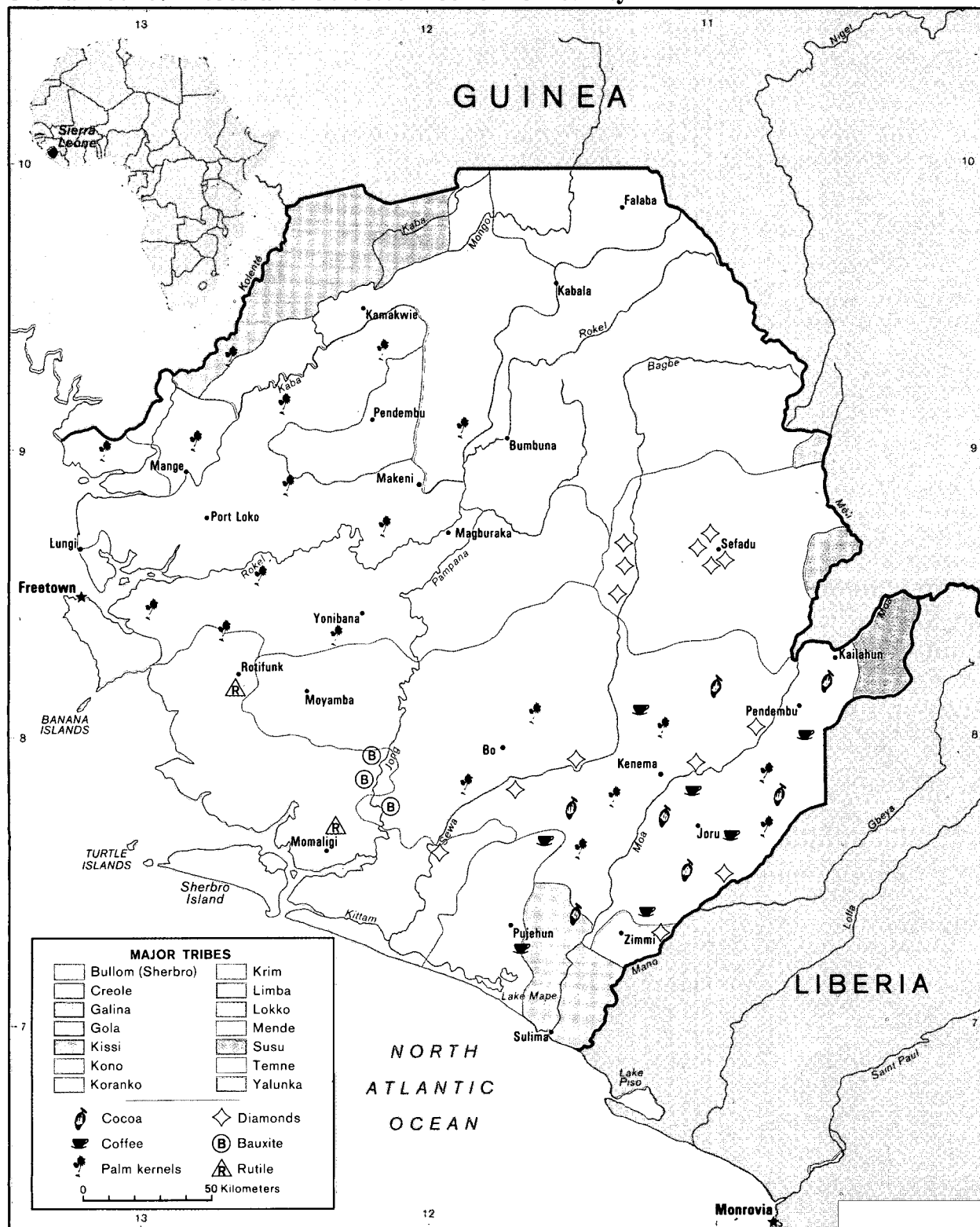
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Figure 1
Sierra Leone: Tribes and Selected Economic Activity



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Sierra Leone: Implications of Instability

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Introduction

US Embassy reporting in recent years has portrayed the deteriorating conditions in pro-Western Sierra Leone as offering all the ingredients for a major upheaval potentially detrimental to US interests. Years of economic decline, compounded by corruption and mismanagement, have undermined public confidence in the leadership of President Siaka Stevens who, despite his advanced age, shows no inclination to change his ways, to step aside, or to prepare for his succession. The Embassy points out that the country is rife with social and political tensions that periodically flare into violence which one day could escalate out of control.

Many moderate governments in West Africa are experiencing growing balance-of-payments and debt problems as export earnings decline, food production falls, and import costs climb. Many of these West African states have been forced to limit development plans and seek economic relief from international lenders and the West. This has further eroded support for weak governments which feel more vulnerable than ever to outside meddling. Instability in Sierra Leone would add to the burden of regional insecurity and pressures for more Western assistance.

This paper examines Sierra Leone's worsening state, assesses its bleak prospects for the future, and looks at the likely direction of future change. It addresses the potential for Libyan and Soviet intrusion in the country's affairs and the implications of instability in Sierra Leone for the region and the United States.

The Stevens Regime: Sitting on a Powder Keg Growing Economic Distress. At the root of Sierra Leone's distress, in our view, is the country's seriously deteriorating economic situation. The US Embassy reports that the rate of real economic growth has been falling since 1979. Indeed, nothing grows except the public debt and the private purses of the governing elite. Since the early 1970s, the economy has suffered from declining production in the agricultural and



President Siaka Stevens Pictorial Parade ©

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mineral sectors, which account for nearly half of GDP, widespread maladministration, rising import costs, and the global recession. Extensive smuggling and black-marketeering have also contributed to the country's bleak economic performance.

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The country's international payments position has weakened substantially in recent years. By the end of November 1982, foreign reserves were only sufficient to cover two weeks' worth of imports, according to International Monetary Fund (IMF) data. The US Embassy reports that earnings from major exports—mainly diamonds, but including some cocoa, coffee, rutile (titanium oxide), and bauxite—have remained low, reflecting depressed world markets, the depletion of easily accessible alluvial diamond deposits, and increased smuggling into neighboring countries.

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Payment problems have been compounded by Sierra Leone's hefty import bill, which reflects rising costs of petroleum and other essential goods, particularly rice, a dietary staple. Agricultural production has fallen 12 percent in real terms in the last four years alone

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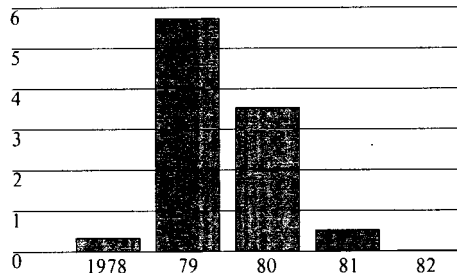
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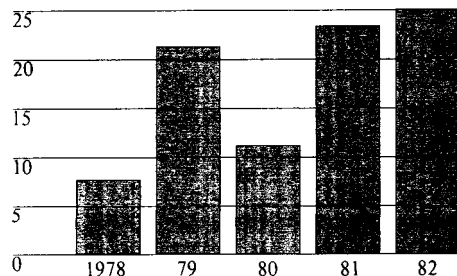
Figure 2
Sierra Leone: Selected Economic Indicators

Note change in scales.

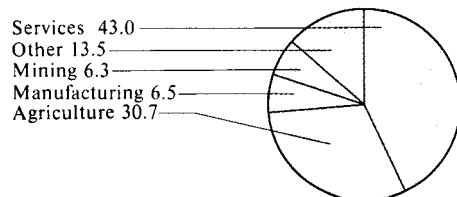
Real GDP Growth
Percent



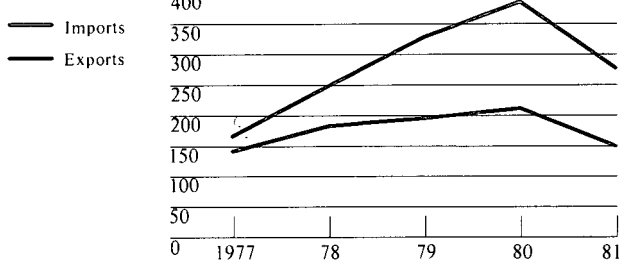
Consumer Price Inflation
Percent



Composition of Real GDP, 1981-82
Percent



Foreign Trade
Million US \$



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Sierra Leone: Exports
by Major Commodities

Million US \$

	1977-78	1978-79	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82 ^a
Exports of which:	177.7	153.6	223.0	151.2	145.5
Minerals	104.8	98.5	141.0	115.1	93.4
Diamonds	98.4	91.5	125.7	82.2	53.5
Bauxite	6.4	7.0	12.7	14.1	14.0
Rutile	0	0	2.7	19.6	21.8
Gold	0	0	0	0	4.1
Agricultural commodities	60.5	49.3	75.9	30.8	46.8
Coffee	32.6	20.3	31.2	14.5	22.2
Cocoa	21.2	24.3	30.2	12.4	17.3
Palm kernels	1.3	1.3	5.0	1.1	2.2

^a Projected.

because of low, state-imposed producer prices. Stevens has had to borrow against future diamond sales or rely on wealthy Lebanese businessmen in Freetown to help finance imports, especially oil, according to US Embassy sources. In addition, the government has amassed \$450 million in external debt and has built up payment arrears. According to the US Treasury, in 1982 Sierra Leone was one of 10 Sub-Saharan countries forced to obtain debt relief from official creditors.

The financial pinch prompted Sierra Leone to approach the IMF in September for balance-of-payments support. Freetown has asked for \$21 million from the Fund's compensatory financing facility and has requested an additional loan of \$125 million. A US Treasury official reports that Stevens will probably obtain the smaller amount. Any additional disbursements, in our judgment, will require substantial changes in Freetown's pricing and budgetary policies and the repayment of at least half of \$6 million in interest arrears owed the IMF. In an effort to smooth the way for an agreement, Stevens devalued the local currency—one of the Fund's major preconditions—by introducing a two-tier exchange rate system last December. Freetown also announced plans to pare

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Turbulent Tribal Politics ^a

Sierra Leone traditionally has been beset by intense rivalries among its 18 ethnic groups and by conflicts between the tribes of the largely Muslim north and the better educated peoples of the more developed south. Since the country's independence from the United Kingdom in 1961, this unrest has centered on a struggle for power between the Mende, the largest southern tribe, and the northern Temne. The two tribes, about equal in size, account for about 60 percent of the country's 3.5 million people. [redacted]

Since its founding in 1960, President Siaka Stevens's All People's Congress (APC) has had a large following among the Temnes and other northern tribal groups—including Stevens's small Limba tribe—as well as among the Creoles of Freetown. (The Creoles are descendants of former slaves who were resettled in the Freetown area under British auspices in the 18th and 19th centuries. They form a social and intellectual elite, but they have never held national political power and have been progressively squeezed out of economic influence by a Lebanese community of 7,000 or so petty traders and small businessmen.) Stevens, a veteran labor leader, was designated Prime

Minister in 1967 after his party won a narrow election victory over its main opponent, the Mende-dominated Sierra Leone People's Party which had ruled since independence. The Army commander, a Mende, declared martial law. Two days later, he was deposed by the three other senior officers, who stayed in power for 13 stormy months until ousted by enlisted men from the north who quickly restored civilian rule under Stevens and his party. [redacted]

Once in power, Stevens suppressed all political opposition. In 1978 he pushed through Parliament a one-party constitution—justifying the step as necessary to prevent the country's disintegration into warring tribal factions. Since then, many opposition politicians have been co-opted into the APC, and Stevens has included some prominent Mende politicians in his cabinets; both the ruling party and the government, however, are still dominated by the Temne. Despite the imposition of a one-party state, intraparty feuding and electoral violence among competing party factions have been regular and potentially destabilizing features under Stevens's rule. [redacted]

^a This background information is based on studies by visiting Western scholars at the University of Sierra Leone. [redacted]

this year's budget deficit to \$180 million, nearly 40 percent below earlier projections. [redacted]

There have been recurrent closures and layoffs by many of the country's leading enterprises, including its refineries, breweries, flour mills, supermarket chains, and major mining companies. Embassy officials note that intermittent fuel shortages since last fall have caused particular hardship upcountry, while power shortages have become more frequent in Freetown. Sierra Leone's long-suffering population has not remained quiescent, however, in the face of deteriorating living conditions. US Embassy reporting indicates that discontent over shortages, inflation, layoffs, and decreasing government services has increased and has resulted in civil disorders. Over the past year, the regime has been confronted by a series of short-lived

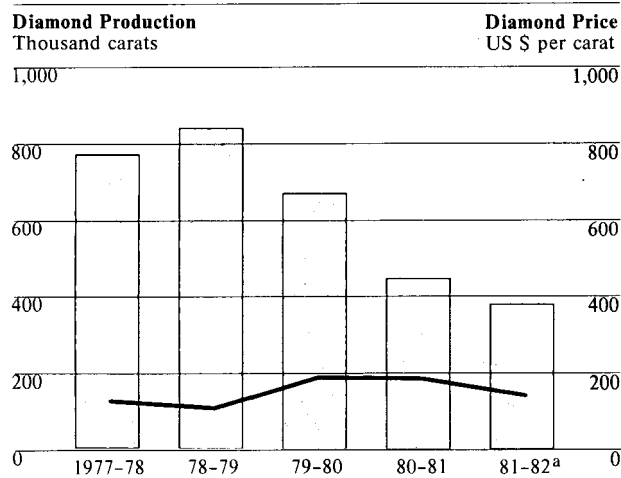
wildcat strikes and riots in Freetown and provincial capitals by teachers, hospital and social workers, and other government employees angered over long-delayed salary payments. The Embassy attributes a sharp rise in crime directly to eroding economic conditions. [redacted]

The accumulated popular frustration over the economy that has erupted episodically in recent years has severely tested the Stevens regime. The US Embassy reported that the government narrowly survived a confrontation in late 1981 with the country's 60,000-member labor confederation, which mounted a two-month-long general strike demanding lower food prices and economic reforms. The strike was quelled

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Figure 3
Sierra Leone Diamond Production



^a Projected.

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by the imposition of a state of emergency and hundreds of arrests, and at the cost of many lives and considerable property damage. Major violence also boiled up in early 1977 when the Embassy reported that worsening economic conditions provoked a series of student-led disturbances which spread throughout the country and lasted for several weeks before being brought under control. [redacted]

The US Embassy concludes that the outbursts in 1977 and 1981 demonstrate there is a real threat that the Stevens regime could be swept away by uncontrollable civil disorder. We believe disaffection with the government's handling of the economy is likely to continue to increase and that serious new violence is possible. In our view, none of the underlying sources of economic grievance has been alleviated by the government. Embassy officials believe that a severe shortage of rice, fuel, or other essential commodities could trigger a breakdown in public order that the regime would find hard to control. [redacted]

Rumblings in the Military Ranks. US Embassy and press reporting indicate that the Stevens regime was dogged by periodic rumors of possible coup plotting during the past year. In February 1982, the government announced the forced retirement of six middle-grade officers after their detention and questioning for alleged plotting. According to sources of the US Embassy, several of these officers had a following among junior officers and enlisted men. [redacted]

[redacted] some middle-grade and junior officers have voiced discontent with the government's economic record, corruption, and cronyism. [redacted]

The US Embassy has received reports of unhappiness among lower ranking officers and enlisted men who do not enjoy the financial benefits, opportunities for graft, and other privileges enjoyed by senior officers. On the basis of these reports, the Embassy speculates that dissension may be growing within the lower ranks over their own and the country's plight. [redacted]

[redacted] More recently, the US defense attache in Monrovia pointed out that recent budget cuts Stevens has been forced to adopt have postponed a planned reorganization of the military that was intended to alleviate lack of opportunities for advancement. [redacted]

Rumblings within the security forces have caused Stevens to watch them even more closely than before. US Embassy sources report that Stevens holds the defense portfolio and closely monitors the 3,000-man Army and the 1,000- to 2,000-man Special Security Detachment,¹ especially the privileged senior ranks of both services. In addition, key senior officers belong either to Stevens's own northern Limba tribe or to the northern Temnes who are allied with the President's party. [redacted]

¹ The 1,000- to 2,000-man Special Security Detachment (SSD), a paramilitary force loyal to Stevens, is charged with riot control and presidential security. According to US Embassy sources, the SSD was formed in 1973 with the help of Cuban advisers who were providing military and security assistance to Guinea, then Sierra Leone's close ally. The US Embassy reports that the SSD's relationship with the Army, by Stevens's design, is one of mutual suspicion and rivalry. [redacted]

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Bleak Political Prospects

Continuing Political Venality. While President Stevens has managed to cling to power for 15 years, we and the US Embassy believe it will be increasingly difficult for his regime to continue its corruption and harsh repression as the country's downward economic spiral continues. The Embassy reports, for example, that popular resentment of the regime increased last year with revelations of the misappropriation of millions of dollars in public funds at a time of economic crisis. [REDACTED]

US Embassy reporting indicates that Stevens has taken a low-key approach to the financial scandals, punishing some lower level officials while bringing a few new faces into the Cabinet. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] We believe Stevens allows this system to continue because he regards it as an essential ingredient in helping to ensure at least passive loyalty within the regime. [REDACTED]

Stevens's pattern of behavior suggests to us that he believes he can continue to rely on his past tactics for blunting popular pressure and co-opting foes. As reported by the US Embassy, these tactics have involved political manipulation, reliance on informers and bribery, and resorting to the use of party thugs, police, and the Special Security Detachment for strong-arm measures. [REDACTED]

In May 1982 Stevens maneuvered the country through parliamentary elections, the first to be held since he turned Sierra Leone into a one-party state. Although US Embassy observers noted that the elections were marked by the same bloodshed, dishonesty, and chicanery that were typical of earlier days of two-party competition, Stevens claimed a renewed popular mandate for his regime. [REDACTED]

Dearth of Leadership. Stevens, who officially is 77 but according to the Embassy is probably closer to 84, gives every sign of being prepared to carry on as Sierra Leone's leader until he dies in office or is

overthrown, and he has taken few steps to prepare the way for his passing. The US Embassy believes he will probably run again when his present seven-year term expires in June 1985. The Embassy adds—and we agree—that Stevens probably fears that a peaceful succession of his choice could not be arranged and that he would become a target for retaliation by the next administration for past corruption and excesses. [REDACTED]

The US Embassy reports that President Stevens appears to be in good health, but because of his advanced age he could die or be incapacitated at any time. We and the US Embassy believe that the constitutional provisions for succession probably would be followed at least initially; these provide that the first vice president act as president until the ruling party's presidential nominee is endorsed in popular elections. [REDACTED]

The Embassy's sources indicate that the country's First and Second Vice Presidents are handicapped by poor health, a lack of broad tribal support, and their identification with the corrupt old guard. We concur with the Embassy's judgment that First Vice President Sorie Ibrahim Koroma—a northern Temne tribesman with little leadership ability—is likely to emerge as the next elected president, but not without challenges from other ambitious office seekers in the ruling party (see appendix). Koroma's tenure would be short lived, in our view, because the partiality he has displayed toward his own tribe would bring to the surface festering tribal rivalries, possibly degenerating into violence. [REDACTED]

There is an outside chance, in our judgment, that the ruling party would turn to a compromise candidate in hopes of avoiding an internecine power struggle. We believe Stevens recognizes the shortcomings of Koroma and Second Vice President Christian Kamara-Taylor, because he has frequently urged party leaders to begin thinking about a younger and more dynamic man to follow him. In our view, a compromise candidate such as Finance Minister Jusu Sheriff or Foreign Minister Abdulai Conteh might stand

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a better chance of retaining power somewhat longer, but we believe any of the civilian contenders probably would eventually fall victim to Sierra Leone's economic and social problems. [redacted]

Increasing Likelihood of Military Coup. In our view and that of the US Embassy, there is a strong possibility that a violent military coup will occur in Sierra Leone even if Stevens lives on and stays in office. The longer the repressive Stevens regime remains in power, the greater the potential will become for uncontrollable civil disorder and for military intervention. If Stevens dies in office, a prolonged succession struggle could ensue or the ruling party could choose an ineffectual president, and we believe that elements of the military would be strongly tempted to seize power. If Stevens is assassinated, we judge that the score settling and infighting among contenders for the top office would work against an orderly succession and invite a military takeover. [redacted]

[redacted]

We and the US Embassy agree there is virtually no likelihood that Stevens or a successor regime will be seriously challenged by opposition groups now in exile. Based primarily in the United States and the United

Kingdom, these groups receive occasional attention in the Western press, but lack cohesion and significant resources.² [redacted]

Potential Foreign Meddling

Libya. We concur with the opinion of the US Ambassador in Freetown that the potential for increased instability and the prospect of Stevens's passing from the scene could make Sierra Leone a more inviting target for Qadhafi's mischiefmaking. In his *Green Book*, Qadhafi calls for the overthrow of conventional political systems everywhere and implies that any means, including violence, is justified as long as it leads to the institution of governments directly influenced by Libya and supportive of its interests. [redacted]

[redacted]

As events in Ghana demonstrate, we believe Qadhafi might move rather quickly to exploit instability in Sierra Leone if presented with the opportunity. [redacted]

We have only sketchy information about the extent of Libyan activity in Sierra Leone, which is about 30 percent Muslim. The Libyans have funded various Islamic associations in Sierra Leone but, according to the US Embassy, most outside support for these groups comes from Saudi Arabia and Egypt. US diplomats also report that Sierra Leone's Islamic organizations are not politically active and all Libyan money destined for them is funneled through government authorities who closely monitor Libyan activities. [redacted]

² One opposition group, the United Democratic Party, is headed by an APC dissident, John Karefa-Smart, who resides in the United States. He claims his party has supporters both within and outside Sierra Leone. Another group, the US-based National Alliance Party, has organized demonstrations on several occasions when Stevens visited the United States. A third party, the Sierra Leone Alliance Movement, headed by Ambrose Ganda, claims to have a network of informers inside the country and publishes a newsletter from London that exposes alleged government scandals. We believe all three groups are moderate and pro-Western. [redacted]

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In our judgment, Stevens is wary of Libyan intentions in West Africa, but like some other leaders in the region is occasionally willing to accommodate Qadhafi if there is a prospect of gaining Libyan money. US Embassy reporting indicated in 1981 that Stevens initially denied Libya permission to convert its Embassy (staffed by professional diplomats) to a people's bureau (manned by ill-trained personnel), a decision in line with a general consensus by moderate African states on this issue. [REDACTED]

The USSR. When Stevens passes from the scene, we believe that the Soviets will try to gain influence with his successors at the expense of the West. The Soviets may, for example, try to ingratiate themselves with offers of token food and medical assistance. Over the long term they may seek to gain access to port and air facilities in Freetown. For now, the USSR's port-of-call privileges in Guinea and Angola complement its floating logistic support system and are sufficient to meet logistic requirements for its token naval force off West Africa. It also seems likely to us that the Soviets would rather resume their reconnaissance aircraft landing rights in Guinea than secure access to Freetown's airfield, which would require equipment upgrading to accommodate long-range reconnaissance aircraft.³ We believe, however, an acceleration of Guinean President Toure's rapprochement with the West, together with the installation of a regime in Freetown more ideologically compatible with the USSR, could prompt the Soviets to consider Sierra Leone more seriously as an alternative access site. [REDACTED]

US Embassy reporting indicates that Soviet economic and technical assistance to Sierra Leone has been limited to educational training for a few hundred students, modest donations of pharmaceuticals, and a fisheries agreement concluded in 1976. Under the agreement, Moscow has supplied a patrol boat to [REDACTED]

³ Until the mid-1970s, Guinea allowed the USSR to use Conakry as a staging site for TU-95 naval reconnaissance aircraft conducting surveillance of Western naval forces in the Atlantic. The flights presently operate from Angola. [REDACTED]

police Sierra Leone's waters and five instructors for Freetown's marine fisheries school. In addition, according to British press reports, the USSR owns 20 percent of Sierra Leone's fishing company. The US Embassy reports that with the departure in 1981 of the Special Security Detachment's Cuban instructors there is no Communist military presence in Sierra Leone. China, according to the Embassy, is the most important Communist source of aid, providing a variety of highly visible technical assistance projects including a sugar plantation, a government building, and a hydroelectric dam. [REDACTED]

Guinea. In our judgment, increased instability in Sierra Leone would be especially worrisome to President Toure of Guinea, who fears that an upheaval in Freetown might inspire his own long-suffering population to action or that Sierra Leone could be used as a base to subvert his rule. For example, the US Embassy in Conakry reported that Toure's dispatch of troops to Liberia for a brief time in 1979 to prop up the riot-torn regime of the late President Tolbert was intended to forestall the spillover of Tolbert's problems to Guinea. We believe Toure could take similar steps, with no guarantee of success, to protect Stevens or—in the event of Stevens's demise—to try to ensure an orderly succession. [REDACTED]

Such an intervention might be facilitated by Sierra Leone's mutual defense treaty with Guinea, which dates from 1971 when Toure sent some 200 Guinean troops to Freetown following a coup attempt against Stevens. The troops remained—as a presidential bodyguard—for two years. [REDACTED]

Implications for the United States

In our judgment, Western interests in Sierra Leone would suffer little if any damage, at least initially, if Stevens were replaced by a constitutional successor. The US Embassy assesses that any of the likely civilian presidential successors would probably follow Stevens's moderate, pro-Western policies and seek aid [REDACTED]

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first from Western donors. Sierra Leone's basic economic interests and cultural ties remain with the West, and it has frequently supported Western interests on key international issues such as Afghanistan. The US Embassy reported that during the Falklands crisis the government allowed British forces to use Freetown's port and airfield. [REDACTED]

Direct US interests at stake in Sierra Leone are, in any event, limited. US investment is \$75 million, 93 percent of which is in a single firm, Sierra Rutile, Ltd. We believe that Freetown's dependence on US food aid, the importance of US markets for Sierra Leone's exports,⁴ and Washington's influence with the international lending community are factors that will make any successor regime reluctant to see a deterioration of relations with the United States. [REDACTED]

In the event of a takeover by senior military officers, we would expect to see a regime committed to moderate policies at the outset. Because the standing of so many senior military officers has been tarnished by their identification with the Stevens era, however, we doubt such a regime could long retain the loyalty of the troops. As a result, we believe a government of senior officers would be likely to turn power over to an officer or civilian not associated with Stevens to try to establish a more popular and stable regime. Two such candidates, in our view, would be Col. Sheku Tarawalli, Commander of the 1st Battalion, and 50-year-old Andrew Juxon-Smith, who served as head of state for 13 months after a coup in March 1967 (see appendix). While his government never gained popular support, Juxon-Smith is well respected and retains some following within the country. Neither we nor the US Embassy expect that a regime of senior officers would invite one or another of the opposition leaders in exile to return to run the country. [REDACTED]

We believe that over the longer term, a moderate government of civilians or senior military officers would have difficulty dealing with corruption and economic problems and thus would risk being overthrown by junior officers and enlisted men. A new

⁴ In 1980, the United States purchased about 35 percent of Sierra Leone's exports, including rutile, diamonds, cocoa, and coffee. [REDACTED]

government led by lower ranking military personnel, in our judgment, would prove considerably more difficult for the West to deal with and would probably usher in a period of new instability. We believe such a government probably would be dominated by ill-educated, populist-oriented soldiers intent on sweeping reforms but lacking the expertise and sophistication to develop effective policies. [REDACTED]

In our judgment, a takeover by enlisted men and junior officers would offer the best opportunity for the Libyans and Soviets to gain influence in Sierra Leone. In view of the country's precarious political and financial situation, those new leaders would be likely to seek Libyan and Soviet assistance if they judged Western aid inadequate. We believe Tripoli's desire to expand its influence throughout black Africa and Moscow's interest in improving its position in the region could prompt favorable, although limited, responses. [REDACTED]

We believe the prospect of prolonged instability in Sierra Leone would be seen by moderate West African leaders as a potential threat to them and therefore to US and other Western interests in the region. Leaders of Liberia, Guinea, and Ivory Coast, for example, would feel threatened by the specter of yet another coup led by the junior military against an entrenched leadership. US Embassy officials in Monrovia have indicated that a coup in Sierra Leone could lead to demands by Liberia for more Western economic and military assistance. In our judgment, other states, including Guinea, would look also to the West to increase assistance commitments to West Africa. [REDACTED]

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Appendix

Potential Contenders

Civilian



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Sorie Ibrahim Koroma. First Vice President Koroma, 52 years old and a northern Muslim Temne, [redacted]

[redacted] Stevens allegedly has indicated that he does not believe Koroma has the stamina for the presidency. Nevertheless, according to US Embassy reporting, Koroma refuses to take himself out of the running and commands considerable rank-and-file support within the ruling party. Embassy observers regard Koroma as a competent party organizer and government administrator, widely credited with keeping the diverse All People's Congress (APC) under control and coordinating its successful political campaigns. We believe, however, that his lack of leadership ability and his reputation for ruthlessness, nepotism, and favoritism toward his own tribe are serious drawbacks for gaining the broad popular support he would need to govern successfully. [redacted]



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Christian Kamara-Taylor. Second Vice President Kamara-Taylor, a Methodist, about 65, [redacted]

[redacted] He is a member of Stevens's northern Limba tribe. According to US Embassy reporting, Kamara-Taylor owes his position mainly to long years of service to Stevens and the APC and has not been outstanding in any government position he has held. In our view, Kamara-Taylor has little support outside his own minority tribe. [redacted]

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25X6

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Salia Jusu Sherriff. If First Vice President Koroma does not get the APC's nod to replace Stevens, we believe Sherriff, 52, who serves as temporary Vice President when one or the other is ill, is one of the most logical compromise candidates. He was a leader of the former opposition Sierra Leone People's Party and, according to the US Embassy, is a Western-educated accountant with a reputation as a capable and relatively honest politician. Having refused to join Stevens's Cabinet since the imposition of the one-party state, Sherriff relented last June and became Minister of Finance, an important post which, the US Embassy notes, Stevens has assigned in the past to people he appeared to be grooming to succeed him. While Sherriff's tribal affiliation with the southern Mende may well be a handicap to winning wide enough APC support, [redacted]

[redacted]
[redacted] married to a Creole, and commands some cross-tribal support among students and workers. [redacted]



Abdulai Conteh. Foreign Minister Conteh, 37 years old and from the northern minority Susu tribe, is, according to the US Embassy, one of Sierra Leone's brighter and more attractive younger politicians. Although Conteh is highly regarded by Stevens, we believe many of his colleagues in the APC probably would consider him too young and inexperienced and lacking a wide enough political following for the presidency. [redacted]

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25X1

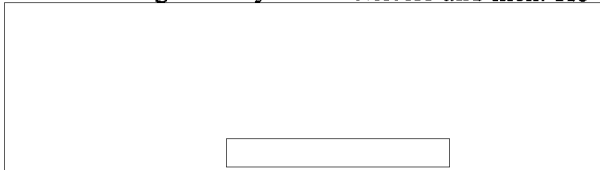
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Military

Col. Sheku Tarawalli. He has been the commander of the Army's key 1st Battalion in Freetown since 1971. A Muslim of the northern Koranko tribe, the 42-year-old Tarawalli is said by US defense attache reporting to be well regarded by fellow officers and men. He



Andrew Juxon-Smith. He is a 50-year-old former Army colonel, of mixed southern tribal origin, who headed a military junta that ruled from March 1967 to April 1968 with the aim of halting corruption, tribalism, and economic decline. According to US Embassy reports, Juxon-Smith's willful and erratic behavior alienated most other council members, and his regime was never able to consolidate power. Despite his faults, the Embassy notes that many Sierra Leoneans today look back wistfully on Juxon-Smith's relatively honest and efficient style of administration. He is presently a businessman in Freetown.



Brig. Gen. Joseph Momoh. The commander of the armed forces since 1973, Momoh is a 46-year-old northern Limba tribesman and is portrayed by [redacted] reporting as completely loyal to President Stevens. Momoh won his present position after sticking by Stevens during an unsuccessful coup attempt in 1972, and he has eschewed politics ever since. The commander's relationship with junior officers is not good, according to attache reporting, because he tolerates corruption within the higher ranks and tribal favoritism in the promotion of officers. Momoh received most of his military training in Britain. [redacted]

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